

Ice Wine

1/15/03

ATF has recently released a ruling, [ATF Ruling 2002-7](#), restating our definition of ice wine and addressing the labeling of wines which are not true ice wines. The new ruling holds that wine made from grapes frozen after harvest may not be labeled with the term “ice wine” or any variation thereof, and if the wine is labeled to suggest it was made from artificially frozen grapes, the label must be qualified to reflect this. This ruling amplifies two previous ATF Rulings, 78-4 and 82-4. ATF Ruling 78-4, 1978 C.B. 61, held that the term “ice wine” may only appear on labels of wine made from grapes that were partially frozen on the vine. ATF Ruling 82-4, 1982-2 Q.B. 43 held, in part, that wine made from concentrate or which has been sweetened or fortified may not bear labels containing the terms “late harvest”, “ice wine” or similar terms.

ATF is aware that a number of domestic wine producers desiring to make a wine similar in style to ice wine are practicing cryoextraction in which the grapes are frozen after harvest but before pressing. The production of true ice wine is a labor-intensive process with the grapes harvested by hand after they have naturally frozen on the vines. The frozen grapes are then pressed. As the grapes are pressed, the natural water portion of the juice remains inside of the grape skins as ice crystals while a small amount of sweet, highly concentrated juice is expressed. While cryoextraction is a cost-effective means of producing juice with properties similar to juice pressed from grapes frozen on the vine, wines produced in this manner are not true ice wines and cannot be labeled as such; this includes but is not limited to using “ice wine” or foreign terms which translate to “ice wine” on the label.

The Alcohol Labeling and Formulation Division (ALFD) is aware that a number of domestic wine producers hold approved Certificates of Label Approval (COLAs) for wines labeled “ice wine” or similar terms implying the product is an ice wine when, in fact, the wines were made with artificially frozen grapes. In addition to the aforementioned ruling addressing labeling issues affecting true and imitation ice wines, 27 CFR 4.39(a)(1) prohibits the use of any term or statement on a wine label which tends to create a misleading impression about the wine. Because “ice wine” is a recognized term for wine made from grapes frozen on the vine, the use of this term or others which may suggest the product is ice wine is misleading to consumers if used on a label of wine made using methods such as cryoextraction which simulate the properties of ice wine. ALFD must ensure alcohol beverage labels comply with federal regulations and accurately reflect the composition of the product. Wines labeled as ice wines made from grapes frozen after harvest do not reflect the actual nature of the product.

If you hold a COLA for a product labeled “ice wine” which is not made from grapes harvested after naturally freezing on the vine, ALFD is asking that you do the following:

- Surrender your original COLA to ALFD.
- Submit a new COLA application (in duplicate) with “ice wine” or any foreign word literally translating to “ice wine” removed.
- If you wish to use other terms on the label which might suggest the wine is similar in style to ice wine, ALFD will evaluate these on a case-by-case-basis. Additionally, a disclaimer statement must be included on the label indicating the grapes were frozen post-harvest. An example of an acceptable disclaimer statement is, “Made from grapes frozen post-harvest.”

Should you have questions about submitting labels for products made from artificially frozen grapes, please contact ALFD Customer Service at (202) 927-8140.